

Extra Virgin & Organic

original

Products

Spanish Extra Virgin Olive Oil LA Organic Goes for Gold



LA Organic olive groves. ©LA Organic

Picture the scene: a historic country home in southern Spain surrounded by centuries-old olive groves. A starry night, the whisper of a breeze and the sound of laughter and cheerful banter cascading from brightly lit windows as old friends catch up over dinner, savoring bottomless glasses of Spanish wine and marveling at the wonders of local gastronomy. An idea is formed: This is your olive oil? It is fabulous! We should sell it! I could design the packaging! I could help with the blends! Let's do it!



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<http://www.foodswinesfromspain.com/spanishfoodwine/global/products-recipes/products/more-about-products/REG2015524667.html>



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This wouldn't be the first time that an idea like this one has been born between friends in a moment of buoyant enthusiasm, but when the old friends involved include Pedro Gómez de Baeza, whose family owns this 200 year old estate in Andalusia, world-famous designer [Philippe Starck](#), and internationally renowned oenologist [Michel Rolland](#), the moment takes on new significance. And while the scene above is a fictional recreation of what might have actually happened at this now-legendary dinner, the result is the same: [LA Organic](#), an acclaimed Spanish organic olive oil company that has been taking the world by storm ever since its inception in 1998.

The 'pago' system

Located near the picturesque town of Ronda in [Andalusia](#), the La Amarilla estate was once home to an order of nuns that made olive oil from the fruit of its 15 hectares of olive trees. One might say that Gómez de Baeza and friends merely decided to continue this tradition, marketing the organic extra virgin olive oil from these same ancient trees, some of which are now two-hundred years old.

However, this initial venture was so successful that, according to LA Organic's General Manager Santiago Muguero, "The demand for this exquisite product exceeded production volume the very first year". Therefore, the company, which in addition to Philippe Starck and Michele Rolland had taken on some of the most important names in the organic olive oil business as shareholders – including José Cano ([Antonio Cano e Hijos](#)), Francisco Serrano ([Almazaras de la Subbética](#)), César Colliga and Maximiliano Arteaga –, decided to move to a system of pagos asociados.

LA Organic now works with 6 of these so-called "associate estates" (and La Amarilla), divided into 56 olive groves and spread out over the Andalusian provinces of Málaga, Córdoba, Seville, Granada and Almería. All of these small-scale plantations are certified 100% organic, a commitment that translates into lower production volume and 50% higher costs, but that is indubitable reflected in the quality of the final product.

According to Muguero, the olives are harvested as early as possible, when the fruit is still

very green. This translates into 50-60% less juice (all of which is cold-extracted at temperatures below 24C), but much more intense and long-lasting aromas and flavors, and therefore higher quality oils. Another requirement for the pagos asociados is that the plantations must be located no more than one hour away from their corresponding mill, thereby insuring that the olives are ground immediately after harvest.

Reserva, gran reserva and crianza

Perhaps it is the company's intimate ties to the wine world through partner Michel Rolland, or merely the fact that wines and olive oils have traditionally gone hand-in-hand in Spain, but in any case, it's not surprising that Muguiro compares the company's product lines to aging terms from the [Spanish wine](#) world. He asserts that the *reserva* is the company's first line of oils: the delicate and intense versions of *LA Organic Original Extra Virgin Olive Oil*, which is sold in cans designed by Artistic Director Philippe Starck. The *suave* (delicate) is a blend of Picual, Hojiblanca and Arbequina olives, while the *intenso* (intense) is made with the Arbequina and Picudo varieties.

By the same token, *LA Organic Gold Extra Virgin Olive Oil* is the gran reserva; limited edition oils made from the Almazaras de la Subbética plantations in Córdoba. Here, the suave is a blend of Picudo and Hojiblanca olives, while the *intenso* is made only with Picudo. As to be expected, the oils are sold in bottles designed by Starck.

Finally, LA Organic also sells *Casa de Familia Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil*. This oil is a blend of the best olive varieties grown exclusively on the La Amarilla estate.

Taking off globally

The Cuisine oils are by no means the only ones to have taken off internationally. In fact, LA Organic has found an incredible global marketing strategy in its current and former partnerships with airlines like Iberia, British Airways and Air Canada, as the first premium olive oil to make its way into the international skies. In all, 55% of LA Organic's production is exported and the company's organic olive oils can be found in thirty-five countries all over the world, including all of Europe, as well as in supermarkets, gourmet shops and other sales outlets in Asia, Australia, Latin America and North America.

Additional indications of its international success include the bevy of accolades that LA Organic's olive oils have been earning over the years. Most recently, the intense version of the LA Organic Gold Extra Virgin Olive Oil won the awards for Golden Olive, Best of Spain and Best Organic at the 2015 International Olive Oil Awards in Zurich; while other gold medal wins have come from international competitions like the Los Angeles International Extra Virgin Olive Oil Awards, Oil China, Biol Italy and the New York International Olive Oil Competition, among others.

For LA Organic, all of these recognitions are indications of the company following the right path, producing premium organic products that reflect their origins and their dedication to preserving the past, while forging new roads for these premium Spanish extra virgin olive oils in the future.